

What Every African-American Man Should Know About Infant Conditions



*Michigan Department
of Community Health*



John Engler, Governor

James K. Haveman, Jr., Director

MDCH is an Equal Opportunity Employer, Services and Programs Provider.

10,000 printed at 6.3 cents each with a total cost of \$630.

African-American men often don't like to talk about their health problems. They may not see a doctor until serious problems have developed. This makes prevention of illness and treatment difficult.

Understanding more about your body and how it works can help you develop a healthy lifestyle. This can prevent illness or disease. The major risky health behaviors are smoking, alcohol and substance abuse, lack of exercise, poor diet, unsafe sex and not wearing seatbelts in cars. These are things that can lead to illness, disability, and death.

A number of conditions affect black infants more than white infants. For example, black infants are more likely to be born too early. And, even if they are born on time, they may weigh less than other infants. For example, of all the white infants born, 93 percent weighed more than 5^{1/2} pounds while only 86 percent of the black babies weighed that much.

Black infants also die at greater rates than white infants. In 1998, there were 16.8 black infant deaths for every thousand black infants born, compared with 6.3 white infant deaths for every thousand white infants born. There are some causes of infant death that are greater among black infants. For example, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) occurs at a much higher rate among black infants than among white infants.

What You Can Do:

Learn more about how to have a healthy baby. You and your partner can develop healthy habits before pregnancy. Stop smoking — it will be healthier for you, your unborn baby and all those around you. You could also help your partner to avoid alcohol, drugs and other substances before pregnancy or as soon as you know she is pregnant.

Plan the pregnancy if at all possible. Your doctor will be able to find any health problems before pregnancy and help you to correct them. Your partner may be able to take certain vitamins to help reduce the chance of some birth defects. The doctor can give you information on a healthy diet for both of you to begin before you have your baby. You can also encourage an expectant mother to get medical care as soon as she thinks she is pregnant.

You Can Make the Difference:

Staying informed about your health and avoiding risky health behaviors are vital in fighting the health problems black men face today. Develop a plan that works best for you.

